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ABSTRACT

This document is concerned with studies of the possible relationship between the college reader and his personality traits. The results of the three studies reported gave evidence that there was a relationship between personality types and college reading skills. Intuitive and introverted personality types were better readers. When students were given an opportunity to improve reading skills through a voluntary self-help program, all types responded in the same proportion as in the total freshman class. When disadvantaged students were placed in a special program that included personalized attention, those preferring feeling rather than thinking had a higher grade point average at the end of the term. When compared to the normal population of high school students, more of the intuitive students enrolled at the university. By utilizing personality type, college students might have a better understanding of their reading patterns. (SW)

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PERSONALITY TRAITS AND COLLEGE STUDENT READING SKILLS

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There has been a growing interest in the possible relationship between personality traits and reading patterns of students in higher education. Although many studies have associated personal-emotional factors with reading difficulties, very few have been concerned with the normal high school or college reader and his personality traits. Several studies (Entwistle & Entwistle, 1970; Rankin, 1970; Whitehall & Rubin, 1971) have found a positive relationship when reading skills were correlated with introversion/extroversion as outlined in Eysenck's theory of personality. Stricker and Ross (1963) in their study of college students found introversion and intuition related to a high level of reading comprehension and rate. A relationship between reading and self-concept has been found by others (Berg, 1967; Jenson & Knecht, 1968; Larsen & Guttinger, 1973). Further evidence is needed to determine whether personality traits are associated with patterns of reading and whether there are certain personality types that are more successful in a college setting.

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Because of the highly competitive atmosphere in many colleges, the ability to read at an effective level is a major concern. For instance, according to the admission policies of the University of Florida, only the upper 40 percent of Florida high school seniors are eligible to enroll except under special conditions. A high level of reading ability is required to have placed above the 60th percentile ranking on the Florida State-Wide Twelfth Grade Testing Program, S.A.T., and other national tests. Consequently, all freshmen are good readers.

During the fall of 1972, all entering freshmen at the University of Florida were required to take the McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System Reading Test (Raygor, 1970) and a personality test, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1962). Both tests were chosen because of their relevancy to the college community. The information gained from the test results made it possible for the Reading and Study Skills Center to complete several studies in which special emphasis was placed on the normalcy of individuals.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a self-report instrument, developed by Isabel Briggs Myers, based on the personality theory of Carl Jung. It is designed to identify four basic preferences which seem to structure an individual's personality. (See excerpt from the manual in the Appendices.) Through a

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series of forced choices, differences in the way people perceive and judge are given. According to the premise on which the test was built, each of us tends to prefer either extroversion or introversion, sensing or intuition, thinking or feeling, judging or perceiving. By combining directional choices of the four preferences, sixteen combinations of personality traits are possible. All are described as healthy, productive personality types.

The McGraw-Hill Reading Test, designed for students planning to attend college, has reading material taken from college textbooks. Scores are given for rate, retention, flexibility, scanning techniques, and comprehension. Norms have been established for high school seniors, junior college and four-year college students. The norms for the University of Florida freshmen were slightly higher than those established for four-year college students (Chart 1). In 1972 the average rate for reading easy material was 274 words per minute with a flexibility of approximately 30 words when decreasing the rate to read more difficult material. Comprehension was 70 percent at the 50th percentile ranking.

An examination of the relationship between reading and personality was made with the 1972 freshman class (Millott, 1974). Students were represented in all 16 types of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Chart 2). A study of the frequencies in each

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type indicated that more introverted and intuitive students were enrolled than in the general population as reported in the Manual (Myers, 1962). Many of the sensing, extroverted high school students did not continue directly into higher education.

Types were ranked according to scores on the reading test (Chart 3). The highest total reading scores were made by those students who were introverted, intuitive, thinking, and perceiving, and the lowest scores were associated with extroversion, sensing, feeling, and judging. The highest rate score was in the ESTP group, but that group was very low in comprehension. The most consistent in rate, comprehension, and total reading was the INTP types. Also noted was that the eight types using intuition were the top eight highest in reading. Pearson-product moment correlations of indicator preference scores with McGraw-Hill Reading Test scores gave evidence of a significant relationship between intuition and total comprehension. Introverted, intuitive types were significantly higher in speed, comprehension, and flexibility. A complete statistical analysis and more detailed information concerning the study may be found in Millott's report.

A special study (Tillman, Millott, & Larsen, 1973) was made of freshmen attending the reading center, a service available to students on a voluntary basis. The Reading and Study

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Skills Center is based on a counseling orientation with an emphasis on self-development in the improvement of reading skills. There are no fees, credits, or outside assignments. Each student works independently under the guidance of a counselor assigned to him. There has been a concern to know whether such a service attracts only those students having certain personality characteristics.

Out of the total freshman class, 111 chose to enroll to improve their reading skills. The proportion of persons in each of the personality types was approximately the same as in the general freshman population. No significant difference was indicated when analyzed by a z test (Chart 2). Students attending the counseling-oriented, individualized reading center appeared to be a true representation of the freshman population. All types of personalities seemed to feel a need to develop better reading skills.

Students averaged 7.9 hours in the reading center during their first quarter. Persons preferring extroversion averaged 1.04 hours more than those preferring introversion. Those preferring perception over judging averaged 1.07 hours more. Differences were not statistically significant, however. Also, grade point averages at the end of the term within the 16 types were not statistically different. When compared to the total freshman class, the 111 averaged 2.60 grade points while the

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general grade point average was 2.62.

A third study involved students admitted to the University of Florida below the usual academic standards (Tillman & Larsen, 1972). Under the Expanded Educational Opportunity Program, 150 disadvantaged students were admitted. Their reading scores were very low; 70 percent were below the 10th percentile ranking on the Florida norms. They were encouraged to take advantage of counseling and tutoring services and to attend the reading center. There were 110 who came to work on their skills.

When personality types were compared with the total freshmen class, sensing and judging personalities predominated (Chart 4). Although the requirements for entrance in the program would not exclude any of the personality types, the extroverted, judging personality seemed to have been able to brave the threats associated with coming to a large college campus in spite of low academic credentials. According to Isabel Myers, "The extroverted judging types are the most confident because they are not aware of the external and internal difficulties."[1] The 78 percent in the sensing and the 73 percent in the judging categories of EEOP students gives credibility to this statement.

Possibly, the perceptive types see more of the external difficulties and introverts are aware of the internal problems.

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[1] In personal communication with J. Larsen, April 1974.

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If this is true, perhaps they spend more time perfecting a skill that might be interpreted as important for academic success. Their less confident attitude might help them become better readers.

No significant difference was noted in the reading scores of the various types in the EEOP program (Chart 5). However, it was noted that the students preferring feeling had a significantly higher grade point average at the end of the first quarter. Because of the low academic and reading scores, conclusions were hard to draw. The more personalized attention given to the students in the program might have been most effective with feeling type personalities, and grade point differences reflected it.

In summary, the results of the three studies reported gave evidence that there was a relationship between personality types and college reading skills. Intuitive and introverted personality types were better readers. When students were given an opportunity to improve reading skills through a voluntary self-help program, all types responded and in the same proportion as in the total freshman class. When disadvantaged students were placed in a special program that included personalized attention, those preferring feeling rather than thinking had a higher grade point average at the end of the term. When compared to the normal population of

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high school students (Manual), more of the intuitive students enrolled at the university. A higher percent of judging and sensing types were enrolled in a special program for disadvantaged students admitted in spite of poor grades and reading skills.

By utilizing personality type, college students might have a better understanding of their reading patterns. It would be possible, then, to initiate the appropriate action for improvement of reading skills.

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